



Institute for Apprenticeships  
& Technical Education

# EQA Framework Vision

## Foreword

Our mission at the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) is to improve access to high-quality apprenticeships and technical education, in order to transform the skills landscape in England. Quality is fundamental to this, and central to ensuring the quality of apprenticeships is ensuring that the end-point assessment an apprentice completes at the end of their apprenticeship is a relevant and robust test of occupational competence.

We have a statutory responsibility to oversee the External Quality Assurance (EQA) of end-point assessments. This framework sets out how the Institute expects EQA to be delivered by all EQA providers to provide assurance that end-point assessments across apprenticeships are relevant and reliable, and delivered within a system that is positive, efficient and continuously improving.



**Sir Gerry Berragan, Chief Executive**

## What are we trying to achieve?

In delivering our mission we aim to ensure that completing an apprenticeship provides not only assurance that apprentices have undertaken a rigorous training programme and independent assessment; but more importantly, that they have acquired a high level of relevant occupational competence, as defined and recognised by employers in their industry.

Pivotal to our role is ensuring that every single apprentice goes through a reliable end-point assessment that is acknowledged by employers as a relevant test of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to operate effectively in their chosen occupation. It is critical that end-point assessment gives employers the confidence that apprentices not only have the theoretical knowledge, but the ability to practically apply their skills in a professional environment alongside behaviours that have currency in their workplace.

## Our vision for how quality assurance will be carried out

Through the publication of this framework we will establish, sustain and oversee an evidence-led, continuously improving, and cost-effective EQA service that facilitates access to the market for end-point assessment organisations, whilst driving up the quality of end-point assessments, ensuring a reliable, fair and positive experience for apprentices and employers. This document sets out the five principles which underpin our approach to EQA: relevant; reliable; efficient; positive; and learning.

Fundamental to our approach is the recognition that occupational understanding and live monitoring of assessment activity are crucial to provide assurance that end-point assessment is delivering effectively.

EQA will elevate the reputation of apprenticeships in England, reassuring society, employers, and apprentices, that apprenticeships are high-quality and credible, and those who successfully complete an apprenticeship have undertaken an end-point assessment that employers consider relevant and worthwhile.

By doing this, we can achieve our ultimate mission: transforming the skills landscape through high quality apprenticeships.

**Sir Gerry Berragan**

**Chief Executive, Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education**

## Introduction

End-point assessment (EPA) is the independent test that an apprentice has gained occupational competence at the end of their apprenticeship. This is fundamental to the credibility of apprenticeships and it is essential that employers can have confidence that an apprentice who has passed their EPA will be competent in the occupation they have trained in. Equally it is crucial that all apprentices have a consistently high-quality experience of EPA and can have confidence that they have been assessed in the same way and to the same standard whichever end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) conducts their assessment.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) has a statutory duty to ensure that arrangements are made to evaluate the quality of apprenticeship end-point assessment, and to make arrangements for the delivery of this evaluation. The process to deliver this is External Quality Assurance (EQA).

## Our principles

The Institute have a set of EQA Framework principles that are at the heart of everything we do guiding our policies, practices, behaviours and actions. At the centre of these principles are achieving the right outcome for apprentices and employers:

<b>EQA Principles</b>		
Delivery of EPA is:	<b>Relevant</b>	The EPA is current and genuinely measures occupational competence. Achievement of the apprenticeship is a dependable predictor of success in the occupation
	<b>Reliable</b>	The EPA produces consistent outcomes irrespective of context, cohort, timing or the organisations involved
Quality assurance of EPA is:	<b>Efficient</b>	The process is high-quality, easy to use, cost-effective and facilitates the entry of new employers and EPAOs. To ensure that the right aspects of quality are measured, the right activity is undertaken by the right people, at the right time, and enabled by a digital system that generates actionable Management Information.
	<b>Positive</b>	EPA is trusted and respected by employers, apprentices and providers to deliver the right outcomes. The experience is open, transparent and accessible
	<b>Learning</b>	Continuous improvement is embedded in all areas of the EQA framework to ensure an enduringly proactive and progressive approach to quality

## The EQA Framework

There are eight steps within the framework:

1. setting out the right approach to assessing occupational competence via clear **end-point assessment plans that have been developed by employers** and approved by Route Panels as fit-for-purpose.
2. ensuring that only organisations with the relevant experience and expertise can deliver assessment via the **Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations (RoEPAO)**
3. ensuring that EPAOs are thoroughly prepared to deliver high-quality assessments through **readiness checks**
4. ensuring that EPA provides a high-quality and relevant assessment of occupational competence through a programme of **monitoring EPA delivery**. EQA, which includes observation of EPA delivery, is undertaken by organisations and individuals with the necessary assessment and occupational experience and expertise
5. **reporting on the quality of EPAs**, and using evidence from EQA reports to develop clear action plans to maintain or improve the performance of individual EPAOs including:
  - a. EPAO capability and capacity
  - b. EPA delivery
6. **driving improvements** across the wider apprenticeship system using evidence from EQA reports for:
  - a. apprenticeship standards and assessment plans
  - b. any other aspect of apprenticeship quality
7. **resolving issues** to ensure that any inadequate EPA practices are remedied promptly, thereby minimising any risk to the quality of assessment
8. regularly **reviewing the EQA process and EQA providers** to capture best practice and ensure that EQA is operating effectively and consistently, and provides the evidence needed by the Institute and others

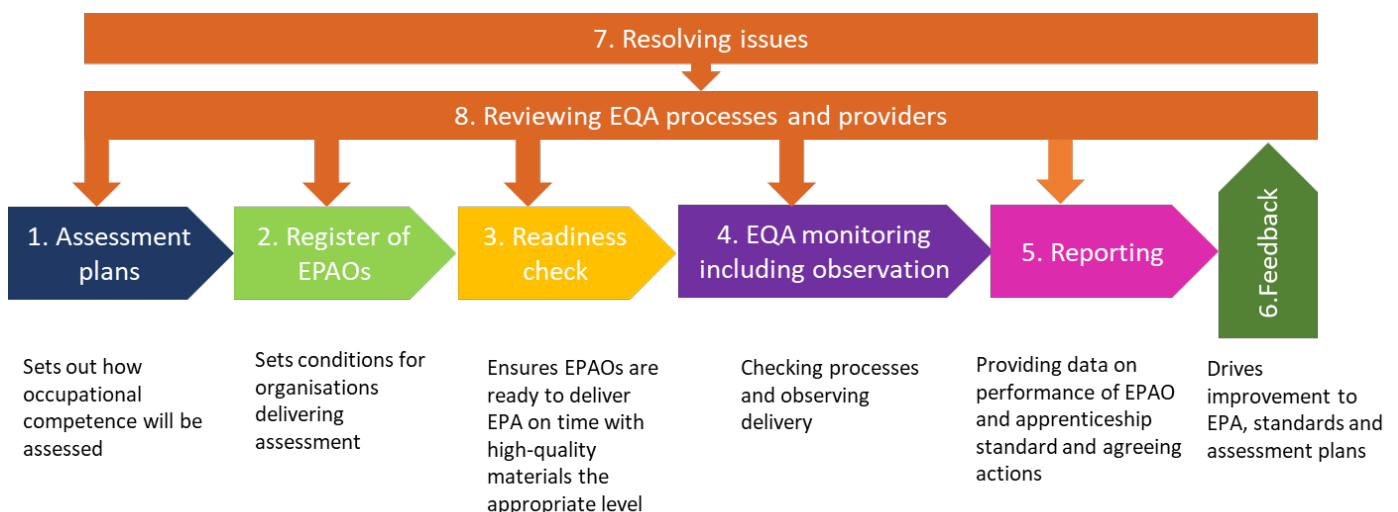


Figure 1 EQA 8 Step Framework

## Who are the key players and what do they do?

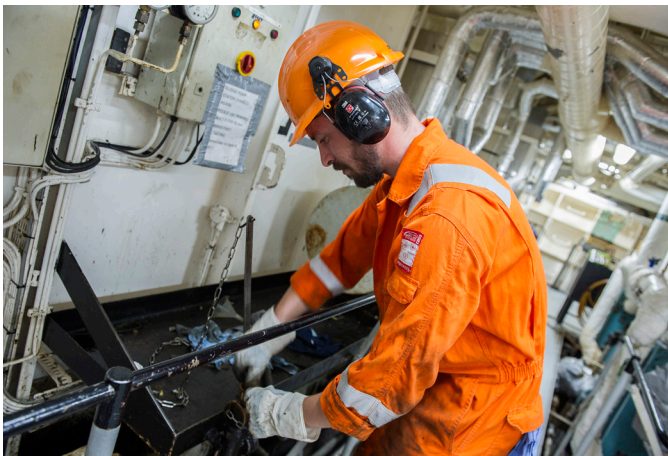
Whilst the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has overall responsibility for EQA and for the approval of assessment plans, there are a number of different actors with a role in this quality assurance system.

**Institute** – our role is to:

- work with employers to define appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices should demonstrate in the assessment plan and ensure that assessment methods are appropriate and applied accurately, consistently and fairly across all standards
- set quality criteria for approving Register of End-Point Assessment Organisation (RoEPAO) applications, and work with EQA providers to ensure end-point assessment organisations consistently deliver an assessment service that meets the needs of the occupation as set out in the assessment plan
- ensure that evaluations are undertaken of the quality of EPA, and that the overall EQA system is effective, efficient and fair and applied consistently by EQA Providers.
- take action to rectify inadequate performance by EPAOs including recommending that EPAOs are removed from the Register.

**Education and Skills Funding Agency** – their role is to:

- manage and administer the RoEPAO
- work with EPAOs over the first year following their entry on the RoEPAO to ensure that they are making appropriate progress towards being ready to deliver EPA, and notify the EQA provider when they are ready to be handed over
- remove or suspend any EPAO from the RoEPAO where they are found to have seriously breached its conditions
- remove or suspend any EPAO from the RoEPAO where EQA has found serious shortcomings





## External Quality Assurance Providers – their role is to:

- give the Institute assurance that end-point assessment delivers occupationally competent apprentices in practice and produces outcomes that employers and apprentices value and recognise as appropriate, relevant and reliable
- undertake a readiness assessment at the point at which an EPAO has said they will be ready to deliver EPA, and then deliver further EQA monitoring activities including conducting desk reviews and visits to EPAOs, inspections and observation of assessment delivery and writing reports
- work with EPAOs to ensure that they deliver any recommendation made by EQA monitoring
- work with all those who are delivering end-point assessments across the standards where the employer groups have nominated them as EQA to ensure they are carrying out this role in a rigorous, fair and consistent way
- encourage EPAOs to identify and realise opportunities to increase the quality of their assessments
- identify and resolve issues through EQA activity and communicate this with the Institute, referring issues directly to the Institute where appropriate
- commit to continuous improvement cycle as laid out by the Institute



## End Point Assessment Organisations – their role is to:

- develop and deliver end-point assessments that fully meet the intentions and requirements of employers as set out in the assessment plan and that they are recognised as passing only occupationally competent apprentices
- engage with training providers and employers to ensure that apprentices are fully aware of how end-point assessment will be carried out and what they need to know and demonstrate to succeed



- secure appropriately skilled and trained assessors to carry out the EPA
- work with EQAPs to identify opportunities for EPAs to be an even better, fairer and more consistent test of an apprentice's competence and performance

**Employers/Tailblazer groups** – their role is to:

- choose an EQA provider for a particular standard based on which organisation they feel is most appropriate to undertake the role in their sector
- design the Apprenticeship Standard
- develop EPA plans to ensure that they set out an occupationally appropriate assessment methodology
- work with the Institute to ensure the Apprenticeship Standard and EPA plans meet the required quality



## Continuous improvement

The Institute seeks to role model continuous improvement in everything it does, including the quality assurance system it supports.

There is a 'golden triangle' of areas where continuous improvement is focused, with the Institute at the heart orchestrating the learning and improving. The three key areas of focus are:

- **the assessment plans** – ensuring that learning from the experiences of applying these plans are captured in a systematic and timely way, and any opportunities to design and implement any changes are taken full advantage of
- **the role and performance of EPAOs** - being clear about what the key ingredients are that enable an EPAO to succeed, with the appropriate EQA provider agreeing a plan to enable them to achieve and sustain the optimum level of performance and impact
- **the role and performance of EQA Providers** – being clear about what effective EQA means, with Institute staff and each EQA provider agreeing a plan to enable them to achieve and sustain the optimum level of performance and impact

In a system where EQA providers and EPAOs are operating as high-performing organisations applying fit-for-purpose assessment plans in a fair and consistent manner, there is a strong likelihood that end-point assessments will themselves be fair and consistent. The Institute is committed to continuously exploring ways by which each element of this quality assurance system is operating at the highest possible level of performance and that it continues to evolve and develop.



## Summary

End-point assessment is pivotal in ensuring that employers and apprentices get a fair deal when it comes to determining the level of competence an individual has reached at the end of their apprenticeship. It is through this that apprentices and employers will gain confidence in the apprenticeship and ultimately lead to increases in take-up of this vital route for career development. The Institute is determined to establish and sustain a committed, high-performing and continuously learning quality assurance system that is trusted to deliver the fair and consistent outcome that apprentices and employers deserve.